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SUBJECT: JAPANESE MORNING PRESS HIGHLIGHTS 11/25/08

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Articles:

1) U.S. president pledges to hand over cooperation with Japan on abduction issue to Obama administration

YOMIURI (Page 1) (Excerpts)
November 24, 2008

Masakazu Hamasuna, Lima

Prime Minister Aso and U.S. President Bush met for the first time at a hotel in Lima on the morning of November 22 (early hours of the 23rd, Japan time). Referring to the abduction of Japanese nationals by North Korean agents, Bush stated that the U.S. government would continue to cooperate to reach a settlement of the problem after the change of administration, as well. Aso conveyed Japan's intention to continue the Maritime Self-Defense Force refueling mission in the Indian Ocean. Bush expressed expectations for the operation to continue.

Looking back on his own tenure, the President during his 30-minute meeting with Aso noted, "The Japan-U.S. alliance has been strengthened and deepened over the past eight years." Both leaders agreed to further strengthen the bilateral relationship, with the prime minister responding to the president's remark, saying,

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"Japan-U.S. relations form the base of Japan's diplomacy."

Concerning the issue of abductions of Japanese by North Korea, the President gave his assurance, noting: "I fully understand that the problem is a delicate issue for Japan. I will hand over cooperation toward Japan on this issue to the Obama administration." The Prime Minister said, "I appreciate your cooperation. I would like to have your continued understanding of and support for the issue."

The Prime Minister said that he would do his utmost to continue Japan's refueling mission. The president responded: "The international community highly appreciates Japan's activity. I hope Japan will continue the operation."

2) Remarks at Japan-U.S. summit, Japan-U.S.-South Korea summit

MAINICHI (Page 2) (Full)
November 24, 2008

(Japan-U.S. summit)

Japan-U.S. relations

President Bush: Japan is our important ally. The Japan-U.S. alliance is the cornerstone of peace and prosperity for the U.S. and the region. The two countries established a solid alliance and then deepened it during my eight-year term of office.

Prime Minister Aso: Japan-U.S. relations are the bedrock of Japan's diplomacy.

Bush: Since the realignment of U.S. forces is important, I ask for your cooperation. Missile defense is also essential.

Aso: I am determined to push ahead with these issues based on the roadmap.

North Korea

Bush: We must tackle the nuclear-verification issue with determination. I fully understand the abduction issue is a delicate problem. I will properly hand over the issue to the incoming Obama administration.

Aso: It is imperative to have (North Korea) accept the verification process.

Global economy

Bush: I am worried about protectionism. It is necessary to move forward the new round of World Trade Organization (WTO) global trade talks (Doha Round) in order to protect the principle of free trade.

Aso: I have committed myself to promoting free trade and the Doha Round, and I will do my best to advance them.

MSDF refueling mission in Indian Ocean

Aso: A bill to extend the New Antiterrorism Special Measures Law for another year is now under deliberation in the Diet. I will do my utmost to enable Japan to continue the mission.

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Bush: I hope the mission will be continued.

(Japan-U.S.-South Korea summit)

North Korea

Bush: It is necessary for Japan, the U.S., and South Korea to closely cooperate in resolving the North Korean nuclear issue. Promoting nuclear verification is essential.

Aso: The abduction issue is also important. I ask the president to continue to offer support and cooperation. Let us make efforts to construct a mechanism to enable the effective verification of denuclearization.

President Lee: I agree. Close cooperation among the three countries is vital.

3) Russian president in talks with Aso expresses eagerness for early resolution of Northern Territories issue

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 1) (Full)
November 24, 2008

Kei Sato, Lima

Prime Minister Taro Aso held a meeting with Russian President Dmitry Medvedev for the first time on Nov. 22, local time. In reference to the Northern Territories issue - the toughest issue pending between the two countries, the president expressed eagerness for an early resolution, saying: "I have no intention to leave the issue in the hands of the next generation." The two leaders agreed to instruct working-level officials in their respective governments to speed up negotiations.

Aso and Medvedev also agreed to focus now on arranging summit-level talks to resolve territorial and other bilateral issues by taking advantage of various occasions, including the planned visit to Japan by Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin. Japan and Russia had initially planned a Japan visit by Putin this year but the two governments decided to put it off due to Russia's domestic circumstances.

Aso told his counterpart: "Your resolve to settle the territorial issue has not been reflected in working-level negotiations." The prime minister indicated his dissatisfaction at slow moves by Russian government officials concerned despite the president's remark in his meeting with then Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda at the July Hokkaido Toyako Summit expressing his resolve to "move negotiations forward, aiming to settle the issue in the end." Medvedev replied: "In any countries, there is resistance from bureaucrats, but (any issue) will be resolved if the leaders are helpful and are determined to do so."

4) Northern Territories issue: Russia shows no sign of making concessions

YOMIURI (Page 2) (Full)
November 25, 2008

Kenichi Ogata, Moscow

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Russian President Medvedev during his first meeting with Prime Minister Aso on November 22 confirmed his stance that it is necessary to settle the Northern Territories issue. However, although Russia welcomes the rapid expansion of its economic relations with Japan, it is showing no signs of making concessions over the territorial issue.

According to ITAR-TASS, Presidential Assistant Prikhodko viewed the summit this time as making no new development, noting that Prime Minister Aso just repeated what his predecessors said to former President Putin and President Medvedev. This source, however, did not confirm whether Medvedev stated that he had no intention of leaving the issue to the next generation to work out.

Prime Minister Putin, who has influence over Russia's domestic and foreign policies, during his tenure as president came up with a stance of settling the territorial issue by returning the Habomais and Shikotan based on the Japan-USSR joint statement (1956). Medvedev is indicating a desire to settle the territorial issue. However, it is viewed that there is basically no difference in the stances of Medvedev and Putin.

Following the summit, an executive of Gazprom, a Russian government-affiliated company, announced a plan to start exports of liquefied natural gas (LNG) to Japan in February. The economic relationship between the two countries is continuing to expand, as can be seen in Japanese companies' advance into Russia and Russia's energy supply to Japan.

At present, the territorial issue is not standing in the way of Russia's expanding economic relations with Japan. Russia is in no way in a situation in which it has to rush to settle the territorial issue.

5) Chinese government repeatedly changes schedule for Japan-China summit

YOMIURI (Page 4) (Full)
November 25, 2008

Jun Kato, Lima

A summit between Prime Minister Aso and Chinese President Hu Jintao was finally realized after backtracking in arranging a schedule on the sidelines of the annual Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum. Some have contended that Japan was jerked around by the Chinese side. Some believe that China was taking advantage of Aso's weak political standing.

Aso held a press conference on the evening of Nov. 23 in Lima, in which he stressed the achievements in his meeting on Nov. 22 with the Chinese president, saying: "We exchanged views on our response to the economic and financial crisis. We agreed to make efforts."

However, there were no concrete results in the Aso-Hu meeting, which ran about only 20 minutes. Although Aso urged Hu to contribute money to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), he failed to get a clear answer from Hu. After Aso's press conference, the Foreign Ministry distributed to the press corps only a piece of paper containing the contents of his statement without giving any detailed explanation.

A source familiar with the Foreign Ministry said: "The Japanese side

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did not think to arrange a Japan-China summit in Peru," since a Japan-China-South Korea summit is expected on Dec. 13 in Fukuoka

Prefecture.

However, the Chinese government sounded out the Japanese government on a summit immediately before Aso was to leave Haneda Airport on Nov. 20. Aso received on the way to Peru a communication from the Chinese side stating: "(President Hu) wants to hold a meeting (with Prime Minister Aso) on the morning of Nov. 21, when the prime minister arrives in Peru."

Despite that, the Chinese side cancelled the planned summit because of "Hu's tight schedule." As a result, Aso and Hu met at a dinner party on the night of the 22nd for the APEC forum, and the two leaders agreed to hold a short meeting after the dinner party. They then finally held a summit.

A government official emphasized the significance of the Japan-China summit, saying: "It is important for the leaders to meet whenever they can do so." However, there is a view in the government that the Aso administration should firmly respond to China's dismissive attitude.

6) Scope column: Prime Minister Aso's presence weak in APEC, unable to present new policy

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 2) (Full)
November 25, 2008

Although Prime Minister Taro Aso tried to take the initiative in discussing the global financial crisis at the annual Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum, following the recent emergency (financial) summit, he was unable to present any new policy measures. Aso also failed to produce concrete results in a series of bilateral meetings with leaders of other APEC member countries. His political presence was undeniably weak, compared with the Chinese and Russian presidents, who carried out a proactive diplomacy.

Aso proudly said in a press conference on Nov. 23 after the APEC conference:

"It was tough for me to attend the conference because it was held immediately after the emergency financial summit. I was able to share with the rest of APEC member countries some measures to deal with the financial crisis."

However, the measures that Aso proposed to overcome the financial crisis, including the injecting of funds into the International Monetary Fund (IMF), were the same ones he had presented at the recent G-20 financial summit. His new proposals included a measure to utilize trade insurance in the Asia-Pacific region. He failed to produce any new agreements in his eight meetings with the leaders of other countries, including the United States and South Korea.

For example, in his meeting with Russian President Dmitry Medvedev, the two leaders only confirmed the contents of the past summits between the top leaders of the two countries on the Northern Territories issue. In his meeting with Peruvian President Alan Garcia, regarding Garcia's call for concluding an economic partnership agreement (EPA), Aso only went so far as to say: "We will consider it in a forward-looking manner."

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In contrast, Medvedev and Chinese President Hu Jintao visited Latin American countries ahead of the APEC conference. China reached a final agreement with Peru on the launching of talks to sign an EPA.

Moreover, since the APEC summit statement stipulated that the new round of global trade talks (Doha Round) will reach a general agreement before the end of the year; chances are high that Japan will be forced to compromise in the agricultural area.

Aso appears to have created fresh sources of contention, instead of boosting his administration's popularity through his diplomacy.

7) Japan to agree to start six-party talks on Dec. 8

YOMIURI (Page 2) (Full)
November 25, 2008

U.S. Secretary of State Rice revealed a plan to hold the next round of the six-party talks to discuss North Korea's nuclear program on December 8. The Japanese government intends to basically agree to the proposal. However, some officials are alarmed about the U.S. releasing the schedule in an unprecedented move, because host nation China used to play that role.

Commenting on the announcement of the timetable for the next round of the six-party talks by Rice, one Japanese government official on November 24 said, "I wonder to what extent coordination with North Korea has been undertaken. I hope the U.S. is not acting in a unilateral way, based on a fixed notion."

Japan welcomes the resumption of the talks itself. In particular, some expect a new development in the matter, because the leaders of Japan and the U.S. have just agreed to document nuclear verification procedures at their summit meeting in Peru.

However, whether the resumed six-party talks will bring about progress on Japan-North Korea talks to discuss the abduction issue is unclear. Rather, there is deep-seated concern that if the U.S. makes concessions to North Korea over the nuclear issue more than ever, it would affect the abduction issue. All the more for that reason, some government sources are dismayed at the U.S. indicating a slight change in its stance of giving consideration to China's position, by releasing the timetable for the six-party talks ahead of China.

8) MSDF to escort Japanese, foreign ships against pirates off Somalia

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 1) (Full)
November 25, 2008

The government yesterday unveiled a draft bill for special measures to send Maritime Self-Defense Force destroyers for the purpose of defending tankers and other merchant ships against pirates in waters off the coast of Somalia in Africa. Prime Minister Aso has told the government and his ruling Liberal Democratic Party to use MSDF vessels. The government plans to present a bill to the Diet at its ordinary session to be convened in January next year.

According to the draft bill, the MSDF will be tasked with escorting Japanese and foreign ships. Specifically, its antipiracy activities are to include halting and inspecting pirate ships. In addition, the

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MSDF is to use armed force in legitimate self-defense if and when attacked by pirate ships. The government also mulls dispatching P3-C patrol aircraft for over-the-sea surveillance.

In June this year, the United Nations Security Council adopted a resolution endorsing the use of armed force and other countermeasures against pirates off the Somalia coast. The planned special measures law is based on this resolution.

The government is also considering establishing new regulations to punish pirates in Japan under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

9) Many difficulties in store for MSDF antipiracy dispatch

MAINICHI (Page 5) (Abridged)
November 25, 2008

There has been a sharp increase in the number of ships coming under attack from pirates in waters near Somalia in Africa. In response, the government and the ruling parties are planning to send the Maritime Self-Defense Force. Meanwhile, there are also calls from among the opposition parties for sending MSDF vessels. This is aimed at making an appeal on Japan's international contributions following the MSDF's refueling activities in the Indian Ocean. However, there are many difficulties to get over, such as what to do about legal

problems and weapons use guidelines.

In the government, the Foreign Ministry is pushing for the idea of sending MSDF vessels for antipiracy activities. More than 10 countries, including the United States and Britain, have sent their naval vessels to watch out for pirates. Given this fact, a senior official of the Foreign Ministry stressed: "The lives and assets of Japanese people are being threatened. Can we depend on foreign countries?"

The government first looked into the possibility of invoking maritime security operations under the Self-Defense Forces Law's Article 82, which allows the SDF to use force as in the case of mobilizing the SDF for defense or public order. However, the government has so far invoked maritime security operations for only two incidents in which foreign crafts violated Japan's territorial waters. The Defense Ministry therefore deems it difficult to engage the MSDF in ocean activities for a long period of time under that law.

As it stands, a nonpartisan parliamentary group of lawmakers—including former Defense Agency Director General Gen Nakatani from the ruling Liberal Democratic Party and Akihisa Nagashima, a House of Representatives member of the leading opposition Democratic Party of Japan (Minshuto)—is now studying the feasibility of creating a special measures law intended to task the MSDF with antipiracy activities limited to offshore areas near Somalia.

However, even in the case of creating a special measures law to engage the MSDF in antipiracy activities, that is delicate in connection with constitutional prohibitions against the use of armed force overseas. Pirates are armed with rockets and other weapons, so the Diet will inevitably have to discuss whether the MSDF should be allowed to use weapons in legitimate self-defense or beyond the bounds of emergency evacuation. In addition, it is difficult to

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instantly tell pirates from terrorists in waters off the coast of Somalia that is currently in a state of anarchy. The use of weapons could fall into a state of unconstitutionality at once.

There is also a political hurdle to clear. The Diet is now in a mood for confrontation between the ruling and opposition parties. There is no knowing if the LDP and the DPJ can hit it off in such a situation. Another factor is that some in the New Komeito, the LDP's coalition partner, is strongly cautious about sending MSDF vessels for antipiracy operations.

10) Japan to abolish all cluster bombs, including latest types

MAINICHI (Top Play) (Excerpts)
November 21, 2008

The government has decided to completely eradicate its stockpile of cluster bombs and not to introduce even the latest types, which European countries have decided to maintain. Japan will not possess any types of cluster munitions. Unexploded cluster bombs have resulted in death and injuries to civilians, and Japan's decision is based on humanitarian considerations. The government will earmark approximately 7.3 billion yen in the fiscal 2009 budget to prepare single warheads that do not scatter bomblets, in the place of cluster bombs.

Japan possesses four types of cluster munitions, including an old type that scatters hundreds of bomblets and has an extremely high rate of unexploded shells. The government is scheduled to sign the Convention on Cluster Munitions on Dec. 3. It will start examining ways to abolish its cluster bombs in fiscal 2009. After ratifying the treaty, which bans the use and stockpiling of cluster bombs, the government will be required to eliminate the weapons within eight years.

Even so, the draft of the Convention on Cluster Munitions allows the possession of the latest types that have an extremely low rate of unexploded bomblets as an exception. Germany and France have

produced such bombs, and countries in Europe are expected to introduce them.

The government gives priority to the need to avoid secondary damage from unexploded shells from humanitarian considerations. There is no guarantee that even the latest types are totally safe. In addition, introducing such weapons costs much, so the government decided not to introduce them, with the aim of totally eliminating damage caused by bomblets.

The government is also working out measures to minimize the effects of the treaty on national defense. It intends to introduce such weapons as smart bombs that are guided to targets using the global positioning system and are capable of attacking more defined areas from a greater distance.

Japan has deployed a large number of bombs for defense against landing by enemy troops. After the draft treaty was adopted, however, some members of the Defense Ministry and the Liberal Democratic Party began to call for replacing the old weapons by the latest types. But a land invasion is now hard to imagine, and questions have also been raised over the effectiveness of cluster bombs in defending large areas. Given these, the government judged that stockpiling cluster bombs is less necessary.

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11) Japan's satellite data to be used for diplomacy

YOMIURI (Page 2) (Full)
November 25, 2008

The government yesterday unveiled an outline of its masterplan for Japan's space activities, which is to determine a basic course of action for Japan's space strategy. The government will study the plan in its space development and strategy taskforce and will work it out in May next year to come up with new specific measures for Japan's space activities, including the use of space for defense.

According to the outline, the government will implement the space plan based on five basic strategies. In particular, the outline stresses a course of action to push for Japan's international cooperation focusing on space development. Japan will contribute to the international community by using its data and technology as diplomatic tools, including official development assistance.

Specifically, the outline touches on a plan to provide some 30 countries in the Asia-Pacific region with meteorological information and satellite imagery during major disasters. Meanwhile, it suggests the need for the government to cooperate with the industrial and academic sectors at home and enhance Japan's technological infrastructure by utilizing the technical know-how of small businesses, universities, and other entities.

Japan has now enacted the Space Law, under which Japan is going to expand its use of outer space for defense purposes through such measures as launching new intelligence-gathering satellites. In this respect, the outline says Japan's expanded use of space for defense is within the bounds of its exclusively defense-oriented policy, adding that the government will consider new space activities in the security area.

12) Aso does not respond to Ozawa's provocative remark

MAINICHI (Page 5) (Full)
November 25, 2008

Yoso Furumoto, Lima

In a press conference on Nov. 23, Prime Minister Taro Aso took a stance of not responding to Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) President Ichiro Ozawa's provocative remarks. He appears to have carefully chosen words in consideration to criticism of his careless remarks from within the ruling coalition.

After his meeting with Ozawa on Nov. 17, Aso criticized Ozawa,

saying: "Dangerous. I no longer trust him." Appearing on an NHK program on the 23rd, Ozawa retorted: "He talks like a street punk, something that is wholly inappropriate for a nation's prime minister."

In the press conference, although one reporter said that the Liberal Democratic Party and the DPJ were criticizing each other, Aso refrained from responding, just saying: "Since I don't know what (Mr. Ozawa) said, I should not say anything." Aso then said: "If I respond to a question, that will be taken as a further challenge. That might be good for you (the media), but not for me."

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SCHIEFFER